

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 DODE-00 L-03 CAB-02
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R 101632Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0154
INFO AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
COMUSFORAZ LAJES AFB

CONFIDENTIAL LISBON 1153

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, PO
SUBJ: CIVAIR - USE OF LAJES AB BY CIVIL AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 19591

1. ECONOMIC COUNSELOR CALLED ON SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORTATION MACHADO RODRIGUES FEBRUARY 8 TO PRESENT AIDE-MEMOIRE STATING THE ARGUMENTS CONTAINED IN REFTEL. SECRETARY RODRIGUES BEGAN IMMEDIATELY BY STATING THAT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY SINCE OUR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS ON THIS ISSUE. HE STATED THAT PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE (PAF) HAS REMOVED ITS OBJECTIONS TO COMMERCIAL USE OF LAJES AIRPORT. HE QUALIFIED THIS STATEMENT, HOWEVER, BY STATING THAT PAF WOULD EXPECT MOBIL TO EXPAND FUEL STORAGE CAPACITY AT LAJES IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT FROM BEING STRANDED FOR LACK OF FUEL.

2. MACHADO RODRIGUES EVIDENTLY FEELS THAT THIS DECISION CLEARS PATH FOR RESOLUTION OF ISSUE IN TIME FOR TWA TO INCLUDE LAJES IN ITS SUMMER SCHEDULE. HE STATED THAT GOP HAS CONCLUDED THAT OUR LEGAL ARGUMENTS ARE VALID. AS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ITS LEGAL POSITION, MINISTRY OF CONFIDENTIAL

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TRANSPORTATION WILL OBTAIN GOP DISPATCH NOTING BASIC MILITARY CHARACTER OF THE BASE AND THEREBY RESERVE RIGHT TO EXCLUDE THIRD COUNTRY COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT WHICH HAVE NO GENUINE NEED TO UTILIZE LAJES AS OPPOSED TO SANTA MARIA.

3. EMBASSY OFFICER GAVE ORIGINAL OF AIDE-MEMOIRE TO FOREIGN

MINISTRY'S EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN DESK OFFICER FERNANDO
PINTO DO SANTOS ON FEBRUARY 10. PINTO DO SANTOS DID NOT
KNOW OF ANY CHANGE IN GOP POSITION, BUT PROMISED TO
CHECK WITH OTHER ENTITIES AND CONTACT US LATER.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED FUEL SITUATION WITH
LOCAL MOBIL MANAGER. LATTER STATES THAT COMPANY IS
PREPARED TO PLACE A FUEL TRUCK AT LAJES TO HANDLE LOADING
REQUIREMENTS OF CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT, BUT ONLY IF IT
OBTAINS EXCLUSIVE FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT FOR THIS SERVICE.
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO GRANT
SUCH A CONTRACT. MOBIL DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT PROSPECTIVE
COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC WOULD JUSTIFY INVESTMENT IN ADDITIONAL
STORAGE CAPACITY. COMPANY BELIEVES THAT ANY PROBLEMS
RESULTING FROM FUEL COULD BE RESOLVED WITHOUT MAJOR
DIFFICULTY BY DIVERTING PLANES TO SANTA MARIA OR BY
ACCELERATING FUEL DELIVERIES TO LAJES. EMBASSY HOPES
THAT GOP REFERRAL TO FUEL ISSUE DOES NOT MERELY
CONSTITUTE ERECTION OF ANOTHER ROADBLOCK. DESPITE
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION'S INDICATION THAT ISSUE
IS BASICALLY RESOLVED, WE WILL MAINTAIN PRESSURE FOR
FINAL SOLUTION.

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